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# MODERN MUSIC

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VOLUME 2

JANUARY-APRIL, 1925

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VOL. II

JANUARY 1925

NO. I

# THE LEAGUE *of* COMPOSERS' REVIEW



## IN THIS ISSUE

THE NEW MUSIC OF SPAIN.....	Leigh Henry .....	3
MODERN HOMAGE TO DOCTRINE.....	William Henderson .....	8
SCHOENBERG'S OPERAS .....	Paul Stefan .....	12
A PORTRAIT .....	Charles Demuth .....	16
RAVEL AND THE NEW FRENCH SCHOOL.....	Roland Manuel .....	17
FORECAST AND REVIEW .....		24

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## IN THIS ISSUE

THE CURE BY LITERATURE.....	André Coeuroy.....	3
WHY MODERN MUSIC LACKS MELODY....	Wanda Landowska	7
MAGYAR EXPLORERS .....	Adjoran Otvos.....	12
PORTRAIT OF BELA BARTOK.....	Joseph Kmetty.....	13
TYRANNY OF THE ABSOLUTE.....	Adolph Weissmann	17
BUSONI THE MUSICIAN.....	Guido Gatti.....	21
PORTRAIT OF PIZZETTI.....	Carlo Pettrucci.....	24
FOLK FABLES .....	Frank Patterson.....	25
FESTIVAL IN GALLUP, NEW MEXICO.....	Frederick Jacobi.....	28
ANOTHER SCHOENBERG DITHYRAMB.....	Pitts Sanborn.....	31
PLACING THE CRITICS.....	Olin Downes .....	33

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# THE LEAGUE of COMPOSERS' REVIEW

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## THE NEW MUSIC OF SPAIN

BY LEIGH HENRY

FOR many years we were accustomed to count Spain as decadent, —a country of obsolete customs and stereotyped conventions, impoverished and debilitated, its intellectual and spiritual sterility symbolized in its arid sierras. The artistic genius of Spain, signally manifest in the past, came to be accepted as a thing of that past, without share in the life of the present beyond the interest attached to historic relics in the libraries and museums of its own and other countries.

Least of all has been rated Spanish music. For decades it has been dismissed as trivial, something "only regarded as *salon* music, consisting almost exclusively as it does of songs and dances" (Naumann). Such features as have attracted notice have become familiar in a guise which renders it impossible for foreigners to realize the development of feeling and thought, the racial tradition, which they characterize. Spanish themes and dance-figures have been utilized by composers all over Europe and America; but the music so produced bears no intrinsic relationship to the tonal idiom produced by the psychology of the people of Spain. Treated as exotic curiosities, Spanish melody and rhythm have been mixed with foreign clichés of harmony and tonality as indiscriminately as oriental bric-a-brac mingles with English Victorian furniture in suburban villa drawing-rooms, the resultant confusion being as vulgar as it is ridiculous. Apart from such

debased imports we have known nothing of Spanish music until comparatively recently.

Much of this is the result of our own complacency. The sonorities of Spanish music have not accorded with the aesthetic theories which we accepted from our Teutonic teachers as absolute; so we dismissed them as crudities unworthy of further investigation. But Spanish musicians have not been blameless. Neglecting or repudiating the rich natural home product, their own folk-lore, they have followed foreign fashions; but since these neither admit of real assimilation by the Spanish temperament, nor yet of the convincing expression of Spanish impulses, the result has been an uninteresting hybrid, in which the two strains stultify the powers of each other.

Meanwhile, the folk-music, forbidden the higher circles, has perforce remained a feature of the life of the common populace, eventually being driven for shelter into the public fairs, the theaters and the cafés of the towns. Here it has gradually degenerated, being modified in the larger towns to gratify the taste of foreigners seeking "local color" of a previsioned kind. Thus all its finer qualities have been adulterated by weak sentiment, and the result, further weakened by foreign mutations, provides the sickly effusions which constitute our "Spanish" dance-hall vogues. But in the rural districts and the more isolated towns of the provinces the traditional art has maintained its vigor and developed local forms redolent of the races and physical atmospheres of the varied divisions of Spain.

Thus the national music of Spain is not to be summed up in a few general types of song or dance. Its varieties are many and as strongly contrasted as the unrelated races,—Iberian, Catalanian and Andalusian,—from which they emanate. Above all, it is utterly false to label Spanish music as consistently sentimental, languorous or even voluptuous. It has a wide range of feeling, even as the literature, architecture and painting of the country, comprising fiery passion, broad merriment, harsh vigor and cool intellectual grace: it is a true expression of the mingled elements which go to make up the nation. And its aesthetics, albeit radically different from that of European convention, have as sound a basis and as continuous a traditional evolution.

Much of the lassitude attributed to Spain was the result of the drain of blood and money caused by disastrous wars. With peace came rejuvenescence. Alien influences exercised less effect. Partly through the self-centeredness necessitated by recuperation, partly through the interest commencing to be manifest in certain Spanish characteristics abroad, the old pride which once made Spain mistress of Christendom began to revive. Invasion, followed by the competition resulting from attempts at rehabilitation, re-awakened the characteristic independence and patriotic enthusiasm of the Spanish mind. This at first took a romantic trend, as in the verse of Espronceda, Zorilla, Nuñez d'Arce and Campoamor: the history of Spain was idealized as a retrospective theme for the inspiration of modern thought.

In music, though with a more concrete reversion to the folk-idiom, work such as Pedrell's operatic trilogy *Patria, Amor, Fideo*, represents this rather mystical tendency. To folk-lore Fernan Caballero turned definitely in his verses, and Frederico Olmeda in his music; but both sought to use it purely thematically; neither realized that Spanish folk-lore demanded an aesthetic derived directly from its substance. Izaac Albeniz, gaining perspective from abroad and Claude Debussy, bringing the foreigner's unhabituated vision, made musicians realize the picturesque qualities, the novel capacities for color inherent in the rhythmic and modal peculiarities of the Spanish folk-idiom. With both, however, this remained mainly pictorial or at least atmospheric in effect. Albeniz's music is ultimately a collection of *genre* studies, colored and stylized by the hues and delineative features of Spanish folk-mode and rhythm. Into a similar application Granados endeavored to infuse racial typification, as in the *Goyescas*; but his work still lacked the unifying factors of an aesthetic and architectonic system directly derived from the sonorities of Spanish folk-music.



It remained for Manuel de Falla to coordinate the physical and spiritual elements of Spanish folk-music into a basic aesthetic for

the modern development of a representatively Spanish musical style. From his earliest published compositions his dual pre-occupation has been apparent. The *Piezas Españolas*, thematically localized as they are by characteristic modes and rhythms, are equally expressive of definite phases of Spanish psychology in their harmonic treatment, in the penetrating inflections which create their moods and atmosphere. Andalusia, permeated with the poetry of Moorish thought, and full of the sense of drama which still clings to the battle-ground of two ideals of civilization, is inherent in the score of his opera, *La Vida Breve*. It is characteristic of the new insight and analysis inaugurated by his work in Spanish music that de Falla here explores and epitomizes as an aesthetic style the Moor-derived chant which furnishes the basis of the most distinctive type of Spanish popular drama,—the emotional songs sung by the folk in popular gatherings and places of entertainment,—the vivid and graphic *Malagueñas*. In a way this work may be said to be the synthesis of Spanish folk-song in art-form, as *El Sombrero de Tres Picos* epitomizes the more formal types of Spanish dance. Again, two dominant characteristics of the Spanish temperament,—passion and humor, tragedy and comedy,—are concentrated in each respectively. The latter elements represent at once a too little exploited aspect of the Spanish mind, so far as music is concerned,—the aspect exemplified in Cervantes and Goya, for instance,—and at the same time do valuable work in dissipating the sentiment which has fastened upon foreign minds regarding Spanish musical thought.

In the *Noces en los Jardines de España*, in *El Amor Brujo*, and the six *Canciones Populares*, de Falla goes deeper into the psychological significances of racial music. The first is less an application of folk-types than an expansion of the racial idiom to embrace purely subjective and personal states. It is less a reversion to a racial style than a propulsion of all the accumulated romance, poetry, passion and remote beauty of ages of Spanish night into an acutely sensitive modern experience. It is an expression of the "genius of place," born of innumerable inherited and experienced associations made conscious through the complex sensibility of modern psychology. In a similar way, *El Amor Brujo* penetrates to the abstract essentials of Spanish sonorities and rhythms,



an affinity to the impulses governing Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* being evident, though matter and personal method naturally differ in the two works. Here it is less the expressed, externally recognizable elements of the Spanish temperament, with its consequent folk-modal and rhythmic peculiarities, which absorb de Falla's attention, than the elemental sources of the racial consciousness. Its matter is a sublimite of the aural elements underlying the racial characteristics of Spanish music. With *El Amor Brujo*, de Falla propounds a new directness and objectivity of method in the music of his race, a fresh primitivism of presentation which pays less attention to grace of contour and external form than to the stark delineation of the dynamic essentials concentrated in the emotional impulses reaching back to the fundamental being of his race. Some of the dances might be extracts from a tonal Book of Genesis of the Spanish temperament; their "modernity" is that of the crude, downright simplicity, the elemental grandeur of vision apparent in primitive cave-paintings recently discovered in Spain, which seem destined to re-infuse Spanish painting with primary impulse.

By such projection of his personal sensibility into the general consciousness of his race, de Falla has created a music endowed with more than personal significance, despite its individuality. Its "modernity" expresses a contemporary consciousness of elements farther back than the records even of tradition itself. Unpretentious, he does not essay the grandiose; but his music has a certain nobility given by a consciousness large enough to realize fundamental sources; and, since these extend backwards through all human experience in differing varieties, it has a corresponding humanity.



## MODERN HOMAGE TO DOCTRINE

BY WILLIAM HENDERSON

THOSE who walk in circles return always to the same place. Those who walk otherwise, even though they may proceed erratically, eventually arrive somewhere else. As Capt. Cuttle habitually remarked, "The bearings of this observation lays in the application on it." To the unprofessional spectator, it appears that at this moment the art of music is walking in a circle, tethered to a stake in the center on which are carved the runes of a growing set of conventions.

The conventionalizing of any art is a fatal disease. It is spiritually akin to the physical condition called by the scientists protoplasmic sclerosis, or progressive condensation, which arrests metabolism, produces senile atrophy and therefore death. Art has always battled bravely against the approach of senile atrophy, and music has never yet been defeated in the struggle. But at this moment the creative musicians seem to be endangering themselves by overindulgence in worship of doctrines and methods.

Let us begin with the second of these. There is a general shaking of heads in these days when a man writes a sonata or a symphony without a title or a program, just a plain, old-fashioned symphony, say, in B-flat. He is rebuked for being a reactionary. Some helpful friend is likely to tell him what he meant when he composed, what tragic or pathetic program he had in mind. One recalls the apt reply of a local composer to such a friend, who said, "When you wrote that work you were thinking of"—and then a flood of metaphysics. "Oh, no," answered the composer, "I was not thinking of anything of that kind. I was thinking only of just what I wrote."

The methods of this moment are founded chiefly on the abolition of the sonata and its derivatives. They presuppose the finish of the venerable proposition, discussion, and recapitulation of musical

themes as merely musical roots from which musical flowers are to be grown. Now, in the opinion of the writer, what the art of music needs today far more than it needs anything else is to return to the creation of beautiful music without any other purpose.

Such a return does not carry with it any necessity of a restoration of the sonata form to supremacy. Neither does it forbid the employment of that form when it is best for the composer's purpose, which might not infrequently be the case. When a man is tied to a poem, a philosophical work, (Nietzsche, for example), or a legend, the chances are a hundred to one that no classic form will answer his requirements. It is also and equally inevitable that his creative imagination is just as tightly bound to the chariot wheels of his literary structure as it possibly would be to the antiquated structure of Beethoven. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that in the working out portion of a first movement form, a composer may write with complete freedom, thinking of nothing whatever but music. There are no limitations to a free fantasia.



I am not offering an argument in favor of the sonata form. I hold no brief for any particular pattern, only for musical form in the large and fundamental sense. The musician, not the theoretician or the commentator, is the creator of forms. The structural achievements of Strauss and Stravinsky are entitled to the laudation of every music lover, just as surely as those of Berlioz and Liszt. But what seems to me to be the difficulty in the path of musical art at this time is the enslavement of the art to titles. Every piece of music has to be referred to something outside of music and hesitates to introduce itself to the world as music and nothing else.

As far as methods are concerned, they are immaterial, provided they afford the composer means for the full and free expression of his idea. Stravinsky's *Sinfonies pour Instruments de Vent* has prac-

tically no form in the sense in which form is taught in conservatories, but its structure is perfectly fitted to its content. Beyond that form cannot go.



Nothing in all this forbids the use of suggestive titles for compositions. The composer who elects to reproduce in music the emotions aroused in him by a masterpiece of literature or of painting or an episode in history, needs only to feel that no authority of the past or present can command his selection of means, manner or method. He must speak independently out of the fulness of his own soul. He may survey with equanimity the whole field of romantic music and declare that it offers nothing of value to him. He will start where the others left off. Or if it is more suitable for his purpose, he will go back to the point at which the others began. Progress in art does not mean that the search for what is not includes the abandonment of all that has been. There should be neither abandonment nor search. The method of expression should be dictated by the work itself.

Technique must of necessity occupy much of the artist's attention. The method of execution is frequently far more difficult of attainment than the conception of an idea. But every movement toward prescribing limits to technique is fundamentally wrong. If simple diatonic harmonies are essential to the expression of a composer's idea, he should not be condemned for using them. Yet in this day it takes courage to write fundamental harmonies. It requires a certain degree of bravery to write plain English, or to paint a picture of which the subject is immediately identifiable. It is a period of neurasthenia. Men will not rest so long as they can find excitement. Musical compositions developed upon the basis of a doctrine that everything created down to the death of Brahms should be relegated to the rubbish heap, are absolutely certain to be without the vital principle of art.

The composer should not be controlled by any doctrine or enslaved by any method. He should promulgate his own doctrines and create his own methods. If he finds old ways suited to his

tread, let him tread them boldly and confidently and without doubt he will enter a promised land. If he cannot embody his conceptions without using the means developed by the modern school, then let him use them without fear or favor. In other words, all that the artist is bound to consider in method is how he shall best produce his effects.

His own artistic soul must be his guide. If he wins the approval of the world, that is good. If he does it by sacrificing his own, that is bad. But when the lions of doctrine growl across his path, let him remember the pregnant words of Hector Berlioz: "It is now generally accepted that in harmony, melody and modulation, whatever produces a good effect is good, and whatever produces a bad effect is bad; and that the authority of a hundred old men, even if they were each a hundred and twenty years of age, cannot make ugly that which is beautiful nor beautiful that which is ugly."





## SCHOENBERG'S OPERAS

BY PAUL STEFAN

AFTER a long period of anticipation, both stage works of Arnold Schoenberg have finally been presented within the last year. *Erwartung* was given by the Deutsches Landestheater of Prague under the direction of Alexander Zemlinsky and in connection with the orchestral performances of the International Society for New Music. The other, *Die Glueckliche Hand*, was staged in October by the Vienna Volksoper under Dr. Friedrich Stiedry, with the generous support of the city of Vienna during its music and theater festival.

That they were presented at all is noteworthy, since for so many years the production of either work was held to be impossible, a consideration which dissuaded even the largest opera organizations from the attempt. Now the entire feasibility of performance has been proved. It is true that many rehearsals were arranged, a practice no longer customary with our opera repertoire theaters; but after this preparation, as Dr. Stiedry has said, his ensemble plays *Die Glueckliche Hand* as easily as it plays Mozart.

Anyone even superficially familiar with the stagecraft of the last twenty years will recognize the almost unbelievable progress made during that period. Modern music is certainly not the last to benefit by this advance. In March 1925, when the Berlin Staatsoper produces Alban Berg's *Wozzek*, under Kleiber's direction,—a performance which has been definitely promised,—a still greater mastery of the technical field will be made. (Alban Berg is one of Schoenberg's oldest and most devoted disciples.)

Granting the difficulties of stage presentation in both these works, let us put them aside for the present. By far the greatest difficulty is for the performer to enter into the spirit, the nature of the music itself. Both pieces, Opus 17 and Opus 18, were

begun in 1909, a year significant for Schoenberg. *Erwartung* was finished the same year, but the work on *Die Glueckliche Hand* was interrupted and completed four years later. Nineteen-hundred and nine is the year in which Schoenberg definitely enters the realm of his new music. We know that his early output, illustrated by the *Gurrelieder* and the sextet for stringed instruments, *Verklaerte Nacht*, in the historical perspective of today assumes a close relation to Wagner's *Tristan* and to Brahms, or at least seems to develop from this point. In rapid succession after that he created transitional works such as the first *Quartet* (D-minor) and the *Chamber Symphony*, which even more clearly tend away from tonality. With the first three *Pieces for Piano*, Opus 11, and the five *Pieces for Orchestra*, Opus 16, all written in 1909, Schoenberg finally comes into his own, becomes the Schoenberg known today, condemned by some, revered by others, the master of a new form and a new content in music.

The new form represents a liberation from all bonds of the sonata form, obviously, of course, from all aria forms of opera, and also from all the leit-motif constructions of Wagner and his followers. The accusation that Schoenberg's form is sheer negation and anarchy has long since been abandoned. He tried at first to render his ideas with convincing simplicity and conciseness. What developed, however, as in the pieces for piano and orchestra, were not so much tone impressions as visions of tone such as had never been heard before. To translate into sound the unheard and unhearable is a desire dear to the heart of the romantic, especially the German; and Schoenberg is perhaps fundamentally romantic, unlike the younger generation as typified in German and Austrian music by Hindemith, Krenek or Wellesz,—a generation seeking above all a new ideal of form, and traveling toward a classical goal.

Schoenberg, of course, also seeks a definitely new form, but only in the works that follow the two operas. He already approaches it in *Pierrot Lunaire*, (1912), undertaking the most difficult contrapuntal exercises with masterly skill. He believes he has lately found it in propounding the theory of the twelve tones and the "fundamental form." According to this, all twelve tones of the

chromatic scale have the same rights, none possesses the function of the tonic:—the theory of atonal music. Out of some of these twelve tones a definite order is established, the fundamental form, which is treated like a theme or leit-motif. Other forms in the same piece must take a complementary relation to the fundamental form, thus introducing the remaining tones of the chromatic scale which are not present in the fundamental form. Where this theory of Schoenberg's will eventually lead us is as uncertain as the future of music in general.

As far as the "content" of his music is concerned, its outstanding characteristic is held to be that in its latest development it renounces the triad and the theory of altered chords, and rests, both horizontally and vertically, entirely on a formation of fourths. This, on the face of it, is correct. The essential point is, however, that this fact is nothing but the result of Schoenberg's independent voice-leading; that even the fourths can be traced back to an expansion of the eleventh and thirteenth chords; and that Schoenberg, a distinguished theorist as his splendid *Harmonielehre* has demonstrated, actually believes he can bring his atonality within tonal compass in some fashion which is not yet clear even to himself.

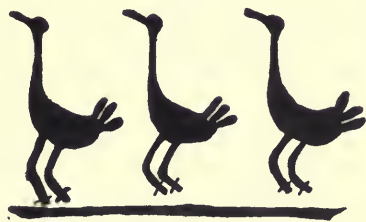
The orchestral fabric of both stage works is rich. The scores are for full orchestra with about four of each of the wood-wind sections. While in *Erwartung* he bases this great tonal structure purely on sound effects, in *Die Glueckliche Hand* he clearly indicates the way to a solistic treatment of each instrument, to a motivistic interpretation of each voice. The vocal parts are unusually trying, requiring the greatest histrionic ability as well. Especially is this true of *Erwartung*, the monodrama. The poem is by Marie Pappenheim. It is a scene drawn with most skillful brevity. A woman awaits her lover in the forest at night. Stumbling in the darkness over his dead body, she knows through a sudden revelation that he has been killed because of some other woman, and enkindles herself at the imperative call of a deathless love. This whole piece is written in four hundred and twenty-six measures and lasts about twenty-five minutes. It rushes over its audience with the force of a torrent, of a wild beast. It



is pure ecstasy, but as an ecstatic masterpiece it has such individuality and greatness as to compel belief.

The poem of *Die Glueckliche Hand* is Schoenberg's own. This is the tragedy of the husband. His wife, for whom he works and suffers, deceives him with the first man who happens to come along. She lures them both on, the husband and the lover, but is finally lost to her husband. All sorts of extraordinary devices contribute to the treatment; lighting effects—also a romantic development—are as important as the words and the music; a chorus speaks in the manner of the melodrama, its speech turning occasionally into singing and chanting; and all this is like some monstrous dream experience, taking place in less than a quarter of an hour. The score is written in two hundred and fifty-five measures.

Both works are of such a structure as to make repetition impossible even for their creator. Like all significant artistic achievements they have the quality of completeness and finality. Our age is rich enough in personalities who can travel other routes. These works of Schoenberg may be admired, may be mistrusted, but certainly not imitated.





"MYOSOTIS D'AMOUR FLORETTE"

Charles Demuth's Impression of Mme. Raymonde Delaunois  
interpreting Stravinsky's song at the concert of the  
League of Composers, November, 1924.

## RAVEL AND THE NEW FRENCH SCHOOL

BY ROLAND MANUEL

**M**USIC, like all the other arts, receives strangers reluctantly within its borders. But if politics invade this domain, then politics must be called to its defense. It sometimes happens that the outcry raised over a symphony makes more noise than the symphony itself,—especially if the symphony is of a frail constitution. At a little distance nothing is to be heard but the clamor, and willy-nilly one must stop up one's ears, which is not the most favorable attitude for enjoying music.

From a distance the modern French school has, perhaps, an appearance of disorder and discomfort. And if music lovers of other countries get their accounts of our tendencies from the writings and lectures of Darius Milhaud, on the one hand, and from the articles of M. Vuillermoz, on the other, they cannot but be amazed at the conflict of such radically differing opinions.

Perhaps the truth is to be found less on the fields where Vuillermoz and Milhaud for three years have battled so strenuously with equal energy but with such different weapons, than in regions more serene where it will be our pleasure to seek it.

The war is at the bottom of this dispute. Between two generations it opened up a deep chasm, which still yawns, which nothing can fill, and whose depths one hesitates to plumb.

In 1914, the French school, of which Debussy and Ravel were the chief exponents, was just beginning to penetrate beyond the little musical coteries and to make itself felt with the public at large. The following years seemed to hold forth the promise of triumph for these two masters. Instead, they were given over to activities and dominated by ideas very different from music.

During this period a new generation arose, doubly desirous of living and doing. First of all, even before creating anything themselves, they proclaimed the downfall of their elders, whose aesthetic theories they asserted had failed, and tried to thwart the fortune that might at last have smiled on these masters. In their attitude there was no preconceived understanding, no plot; in general it was a spontaneous movement, unavoidable, necessary. One may indeed seek days gone by but they are recalled with difficulty. Youth is pitiless. It must be. Imprudent, too. Our youth has been all this in the most naïve way.

Naturally they attacked the dead less than the living, famous older men less than those in the prime of life and power. Debussy had just died. For him they proclaimed a sort of modest enthusiasm, and for the great Gabriel Fauré an affectionate respect. Their chosen rival had, of course, to be a musician who was coming into fame, one still young and capable of new achievements. Maurice Ravel was just the man.

The passage from one generation to the next is always marked by a series of rites whose order never changes: first, the insult and provocation; then, if possible, the assassination and subsequent theft. After the theft the murderers decide that the possessions of the victim have some worth. With these they adorn themselves and the same story begins again.



To understand what is really peculiar in this case, it must first be noted that the rising generation has suffered from the war in its own way; technical apprenticeship was necessarily hasty and often entirely neglected. These young people's preparation for life had all the brutality of a preparation for war. Impatient, bellicose, and, with few exceptions, poorly armed, they elected as their chief a musician like themselves, a singular artist, a sort of customs-collector Rousseau of music, who counted far less be-

cause of his own works than because of those he inspired. Erik Satie, always a precursor, has been throughout thirty-five years the instigator of all audacity, the manager of all imprudence. This will be his best and, all in all, his only title to fame. He has found in the practice of ingratitude the secret of eternal youth. Debussy owes him a great deal, and Ravel, and the Stravinsky of *Mavra*, as well as Poulenc and Auric, to say nothing of the pupils of that new group known as the school of Arcueil. A curious destiny this man's, who will leave behind him probably not one great work but certainly a great name.



Satie was the high-priest of the little musical chapels which arose in Paris about the end of the war. He was the patron first of the society of the *Nouveaux Jeunes*, out of which in 1919 came the famous Group of Six.

The Group of Six was actually formed without the knowledge of its members, by a Paris critic, M. Collet. After having heard, first at the Vieux-Colombier concerts and later at Darius Milhaud's, various pieces by Auric, Milhaud, Durey, Poulenc, Honegger and Tailleferre, he compared these six French artists to the five Russians. This naïveté found public favor. United by friendship, the Six were by no means aesthetically a unit. In fact one seldom sees six such different heads under one bonnet. These young people had nothing in common. They even differed in their feeling toward their foster father Satie, and their good friend Jean Cocteau. A work on aesthetics by the latter, a very remarkable thing in itself, which appeared at the same time as the articles of M. Collet, was in full accord only with the tendencies of Georges Auric, and to a certain extent with those of Poulenc. Neither Milhaud, nor Durey, nor Germaine Tailleferre could have subscribed unrestrictedly to the aphorisms set forth in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* of Cocteau. As to Honegger, his tendency expressed itself in exactly the opposite direction.



One desire, and that quite a natural one,—to make themselves known during adverse times,—held the Six together. “We have seen,” wrote Milhaud, “in the formation of this group a means to coordinate our activities.” Nevertheless, in spite of what they already stood for individually, the Six were to see themselves shut in a closer circle than they had expected. Reasons of state often compelled them to hide their differences. More than once, either with silence or with complaisance, they permitted their enemies or their rivals to credit the group as a whole with the ideas of one of them. *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*, which would have been favorably received in so far as it was a work of the poet Jean Cocteau, passed for the catechism of the Six, and in this guise excited the wrath of the eminent critic Vuillermoz, who attributed to these young victims a deep contempt for Debussy and Ravel.



It is noteworthy that there is no question of Ravel in *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*, where on the other hand Debussy’s aesthetics are severely censured. The origin of the anti-Ravel movement lies in another place, a place where we again find Erik Satie. Former friend, former admirer, former debtor of Ravel, he never succeeded in dragging him into his Machiavellian political combinations, and always in this connection ran foul of Ravel’s cold spirit of independence. Published in the little reviews of the *avant-garde*, the attacks of Satie on Ravel were always based on insults.

Opposed to this group of young musicians who, ardent and restless as it is natural to be at their age, are compromised despite themselves by the witticisms of Cocteau and the violences of Erik Satie, let us picture Maurice Ravel,—ironical, making reserve a first law unto himself, and masking charming simplicity under the set smile of a precise decorum. Ravel is a man whom his most intimate friends have never seen in his shirt sleeves. He is too well bred to try to interest the public in his affairs. Great enthusiasms are not at all in his line. He is not readily encouraging;

still less is he a toady. He lives in the country, apart from the Parisian tumult; he answers no letters, writes no articles, is the despair of all photographers and interviewers, neglects his own interests, and cares so little about his reputation that he seems to be the least dangerous man in the world to attack. Most fortunately his music is of a stature to defend itself, and to do so victoriously. Georges Auric, who on several occasions had the courage to attack it straightforwardly, with frankness and courtesy, now has the courage to praise it.

Here as elsewhere, one can measure the importance of the work by the liveliness of the reaction which it arouses, and its vitality by the character of its defense. So far, Ravel has put up a serene front to the accusations which some of the young men hurl against him, crusading for an aesthetic principle of which he himself is at the present time the only valid exponent. Stark simplicity, "art stripped to the bone," which the prophets of the new dispensation proclaim with a paradoxical wealth of imagery and lack of simplicity, does not flourish very often in the undergrowth of pretended polytonality, and it is in Ravel's music that the best examples of these qualities are still to be found. The reestablishment of the cult of Gounod, which is the order of the day, corresponds about exactly with the breaking in of an open door,—a door opened by Chabrier and Fauré forty years ago and kept open by Debussy and Ravel.



In so far as we are seeking a purer line, a clearer design, a more incisive musical speech; in so far as we feel the need not of a return to classicism but of a new classicism; in so far as, weary of the facile sleight of hand of false magicians, we prefer the rigorous turns of good acrobats and the integrity of sure craftsmanship to the sincerity of a blind heart, we involve ourselves in a perilous maze which is illuminated today only by the work of Stravinsky

and Ravel, each in his own fashion. That of Ravel marks the continuity of an aesthetic principle which cannot be ignored if one has any feeling for the French tradition. Thus Darius Milhaud gives us no cause for complaint when he compares the author of *La Valse* with Saint-Saëns. Irony aside, this comparison does not lack justness and should suffice to clear Ravel forever of that imputation of impressionism which his detractors have been incessantly repeating for twenty years.

Does this amount to saying that all the possibilities of French music are to be found in embryo in the music of Ravel? By no means. Ravel is not the whole of music. He is simply, today, next to his master Fauré, the most remarkable representative of that sensuous school which has such deep roots in our national genius.

It is not only the right but even the duty of our young musicians to travel in their own directions, away from the paths laid out by Debussy and Ravel. One can only praise the Six for having done this for five years with varying luck but so conscientiously that they are, aesthetically speaking, out of sight. They will thus have known the advantages of union without having suffered unduly from intimacy. *Les Etudes*, *Le Pacific* of Honegger and *Les Fâcheux* of Auric are not less different from one another than each one of them is from *Daphnis et Chloé*, and there is nothing yet to show us that the work of Ravel belongs to the last century. One surmises merely that the composer of *Les Poèmes de Mallarmé*, a prisoner of Ravelian perfectionism, is approaching that climacteric period when great creators are forced to remold themselves under penalty of fruitless repetition. Tragic moment, when one must give up one's most precious acquisitions, abandon them to the conqueror at the gates, and set out with empty hands toward new shores.

It is not by breaking down the doors that Ravel will come out of the prison which he himself has so well contrived. His sonata for violin and violoncello shows very plainly the mousehole that he is digging for his escape. Where is he going? He is not telling us himself, not being a man to sell the bear's skin without having first killed it.



The Six have done differently, following in this Jean Cocteau's advice: to force themselves to kill the bear, they have begun by selling his hide; and it is just this that Emile Vuillermoz holds against them, doubting whether they can succeed in resembling "the prophetic image of themselves that over-lucid portraitists have painted of them."

That several of the Six have already arrived there does honor not alone to the portraitists.



# FORECAST REVIEW

## VAUGHAN WILLIAMS AND HOLST

**I**F the modern spirit in art is, as one is inclined to think, largely a question of attitude, Holst is much the more modern of these two. Vaughan Williams is modern simply in the sense that his honest musical thinking has driven him away from the smug element in pre-established form and conception. His is a big, rather fumbling sort of sincerity which would dare to be ridiculous or even old-fashioned. His music, consequently, is sometimes rather heavy-footed, as is his actual gait. It follows also that in the matter of orchestration he is fundamentally akin to Brahms rather than to Mozart. Some of his earlier work written during or soon after his training under Ravel—such things as *The Wasps* suite—show, however, that had his musical conscience allowed, he could have learned to express himself lightly and brilliantly.

Holst's sincerity, on the other hand, proceeds almost always from an intellectual conception. Vaughan Williams is the noble victim of a special form of the Hardy-esque temperament, and is, as likely as not, groping in the darkness towards a light which he feels rather than sees, whereas Holst begins and ends his work in broad daylight, and often in brilliant sunshine. It may seem strange to group Holst, Berlioz and Strauss together, but they are like each other in this outstanding respect; all three have the ability to express anything which they can possibly conceive—and they all conceive *first* and afterwards proceed deliberately to the carrying out of their ideas. Even Strauss never *fails*—it is only the general unworthiness of his conceptions which pulls his work down. It is this power in Holst which makes him, with the other

two, a master of orchestration; there is genius in his work, as with Berlioz, but, after all, orchestration is largely a question of a keen and peculiar form of common sense.

Vaughan Williams lives and writes in the despairing knowledge that he can scarcely hope to bring on to paper the visions that are nearest his mind and heart. Whether this is due to their very nature, or to the "muddle" of his temperament (there is no disgrace in this "muddle") does not matter, but his music can never be properly appreciated until this fact is admitted—a fact which incidentally explains why, much to the annoyance of his publishers, he is always altering his scores, years after they have been put on the market.

This is why the *Shropshire Lad* of Housman has so much influenced his work since the time of its publication. Housman is one who has thought and felt like Vaughan Williams, but who, after a tremendous struggle, has managed to express himself through a medium which is classic and restrained, but which nevertheless conveys, with a terrible poignancy, a sense of the depth and the moving power of his experiences. In his *London Symphony* Vaughan Williams is still fighting a losing battle, but in his later *Pastoral Symphony* he almost succeeds in getting the spirit of Housman into his music—although in a larger, vaguer and much less finished way.

One of life's great ironies is to choose from the men of strong and profound feeling those who in the end shall become ascetic. It is they who are more often called upon to force the edge of their passions in upon themselves. The very strength of their feeling translates itself into a kind of negative intensity under the ascetic ideal. The erstwhile priest of Aphrodite turning to a sterner faith, serves the new goddess with complete loyalty yet "with an undying consciousness of the old." Of late Vaughan Williams seems to have been slowly settling down to such a renunciation and such a resolve. In his *Mass in G-minor*, written without a suggestion of pose or affectation, in the grand contrapuntal style of the late sixteenth century, with Byrd in particular as the obvious inspiration, and in his *Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*, a kind of static opera in which the composer, in a scene from Bun-

yan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, fixes before our eyes a deliberate musical tableau, he achieves a strange serenity at once intimate and aloof.

And in the meantime, Holst can, by taking thought, add still another cubit to his stature.

*By Jeffrey Mark*

## GEORGE ANTHEIL

A GREAT deal of nonsense has been written about George Antheil. The real personality of this extremely talented young American composer has been cleverly concealed by a welter of words from the most varied sources.

First we have the Antheil concocted by the musical journals,—a godless, red-as-they-come Bolshevik, whose concerts have resembled riots and whose final pleasure and purpose is to turn all Europe topsy-turvy with his astounding musical noises. Then there is the Antheil of the high-brow, literary magazines,—Mr. Ezra Pound's Antheil,—the young "genius" who has invented the "new propulsion of time-spaces," "new mechanisms," the fourth dimension of music, etc., etc. Finally, there is Mr. George Antheil's Antheil who, strangely enough, is hardly less a figment of the imagination. Mr. Antheil sees himself as a modern Mozart, experimenting in disjointed rhythms and ear-splitting dissonances, hopelessly misunderstood by the music critics of Berlin, Paris and London.

For those interested in the future of American music, some attempt should be made to present George Antheil as he really is.

It must be clear from the outset that Antheil is no mere upstart. There was a time, perhaps, when he used rather questionable methods of calling attention to himself,—touring Germany as a self-styled futurist composer and publishing wild manifestoes in the *avant-garde* magazines. In the last analysis, this was not charlatanism but simply the naïveté of a very youthful person carried away by the mode of the day. Certainly he was awarded a greater *réclame* than was good for him and it did, in some measure, turn his head. But Antheil is essentially a very sincere

musician, absorbed in his work and oblivious to the opinions of everybody.

It is not sufficient, however, to be merely sincere. Antheil is more than that,—a born musician if ever there was one. He is of Polish extraction although Trenton is his native town. From the age of four to thirteen he lived in Poland and those nine impressionable years have left their mark on his music. He possesses a gift of melody-making and a keen feeling for striking rhythmic agglomerations that are uncommon in so young a composer. It is difficult to remain coldly critical before his perfect musicianship. Hear him play the accompaniment of a Mozart concerto and you will understand what is meant; when he plays his own compositions the effect is electrifying.

Although Antheil has a considerable list of works to his credit, few of them withstand close examination. The *Symphony for Five Wind Instruments* has no backbone, no structural significance, the *Sonatas for Violin and Piano* lack a sense of climax, the *Jazz Sonata* is simply a poor restatement of the Stravinsky *Piano Rag-Music*. And if Antheil's music did not make us suspect his lack of a natural feeling for form, the various articles he has written on musical subjects would convey that impression. Occasionally they are a mere "mass of verbiage" and "must be taken rather as evidence of mental activity than as exposition of ideas." In the same way it is to be feared that, so far, Antheil's compositions have been signs of musical activity rather than finished art-contributions with a life of their own.

All this points to the inference that Antheil's teachers, Von Sternberg and Ernest Bloch, had very little influence upon him. "Counterpoint," he says, "can be learned by any idiot in a couple of years." Bloch, the teacher, hardly interested him, but Bloch, the composer, fascinated him. Before that, Antheil had undoubtedly been fascinated by many another contemporaneous master; his early piano pieces sound for all the world like pure Debussy and others make excellent use of the Scriabinic technique. Antheil, himself, would be the last to blush because of all this unconscious plagiarism. "Every Beethoven," he says, "must have his Mozart."

In 1921, when Antheil returned to Europe for a second time, he met his Mozart in Igor Stravinsky. Ever since, he has been



struggling to shake off the powerful influence of that Russian giant. Antheil was not simply content to write four-hand piano duets in the manner of the *Cinq Pièces Faciles*, but he must note them down on manuscript paper of the same shape and size used by the Swiss publishers. Because Stravinsky utilized dynamic effects with consummate mastery Antheil became convinced that "all music is rhythm" and that anyone who composed solely in a 3-4, 2-4, 6-8 or 4-4 bar for an entire piece, was writing nothing but "doggerel." It must be admitted that the lot of the young composer who comes after Stravinsky is truly a hard one. He cannot even react from Stravinsky as Debussy reacted from Wagner, for the simple reason that Stravinsky has already reacted from himself.

Fortunately, Antheil now realizes the part Stravinsky has played in his musical development. That means that he is one step nearer to finding his own personal idiom. Exactly what kind of music he will write in the future would be impossible to prophesy. But certain passages in the *Piano Concerto*, in the two *Sonatas for Violin and Piano*, and especially in the *Symphony for Five Wind Instruments* make us confident that an enviable future is before him.

*By Aaron Copland*

## A BRAZILIAN RABELAIS

**A**T first hearing, the music of Villa-Lobos strikes the ear with an effect of shock, painful or baffling. Eventually it divides its audience—to some it brings an authentic musical message, to others it represents a mere dissipation of energy.

Crossing the seas that separate Europe from his own continent, the music of this young Brazilian within the last ten years has found a way more or less triumphant into the concert halls of most important musical centers. The occasions on which his works were heard in Paris last season were demonstrations of a unique power to get under the skin of the audience and win either supreme admiration or supreme contempt.

Of all South American composers none possesses a bolder, more audacious talent, a more inventive genius than Hector Villa-Lobos. He is a creator of ambiances, of spiritual vistas. Intellectually and emotionally he is alive to the world. In his nature the qualities of savage races and of exquisitely civilized peoples meet, and this union is the determining cause of a rare sensibility. With unusual, powerful imagery he combines the ridiculous and the pathetic. He is a Rabelais of the new music with a laughter that is generous, rude and gusty. And yet, beneath his colorful phrases, his lawless rhythms, as in the *Historietas* and *La Famille du Bébé*, there is profound and glowing feeling.

Above all he is a master of style. His work discloses a luxuriant at-homeness in every manner, from the classical to the most intrepid present-day practice. No matter how he expresses himself, he always gives the true essence of the formula—but never at the sacrifice of his own individual quality.

For a man still in his thirty-fourth year his musical output is prolific to an outstanding degree. It includes quintets, quartets, trios, piano and violin, and piano sonatas, constructed according to established rules. There are chamber works in which the accepted laws are ignored, such as his *Octet* for piano, flute, clarinet, two violins, alto, violoncello and contrabass; his *Quartet* for great flute, saxophone, celesta and harp, with a chorus of female voices; and the *Mystic Sextet* for harp, celesta, flute, zither, guitar and saxophone, with a chorus of male voices and drums. There are at least one hundred and thirty other pieces, not including an imposing group of symphonies and symphonic poems such as *Légende Indigène*, *Suite Paulista*, *Carnaval de Brazil*, *African Dances*, *Le Centaure d'Or*, and his operas *Femina*, *Jesus* and *Isaht*.

The most superficial acquaintance with these works reveals an extraordinary responsiveness to life. His microscopic penetration seeks to translate the meanest every-day incidents into tone. Tone, nevertheless, is important to him first for its dynamic and then for its emotional effect, the *Ironie and Sentimental Epigrammes*, set to six poems of Ronald Carvalho, especially illustrating his love of sonorities.

Despite the influence of Debussy and certain Russians, Villa-Lobos developed an early abhorrence of pattern, and liberated

himself from slavery to accepted models. His rhythms are extremely personal, and in creating a language of his own he has impressed upon it the characteristic attributes of a rare spirit. His melodic line is acute and fine, never at rest, never over-taken; and passage notes are treated as principal notes of departure to new fields.

The tendency of Villa-Lobos, in which, of course, he reflects his epoch, is towards elegance by means of a simplification of line. He never confuses affluence with redundancy, neither does he mistake zeal for the forceful expression of thought.

Without doubt he is the finest epitome of his country's culture, for, more than any other musical representative of Brazil, he seems to be actuated by the "interior flame" of his race. It is not the synthesis in his music of the ethnic elements of the Portuguese Africans and Indians that makes it remarkable, but rather its disclosure of a "new entity or the specific character of a people that is commencing to define itself intellectually, artistically and morally."

*By Irving Schwerké*





## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

LEIGH HENRY, one of the most brilliant European writers on music, noted for his ardent support of the new schools, was introduced to the Review's readers by his article "We Are Seven," appearing last February. A leading contributor to several English papers, he is also musical editor of the Western Mail.

WILLIAM HENDERSON, music critic of the Sun, is recognized in New York as the dean of his profession. In his present position, and for many preceding years in a similar post on the Herald, he has distinguished himself for the combination of scholarly and conservative background with a catholic taste and an open mind toward new ventures.

PAUL STEFAN, one of the younger Austrian musicians, has been associated with Egon Wellesz in the promotion of modern music in Vienna. He is most widely known as the editor of the radical Viennese magazine, *Musikblaetter des Anbruch*, one of the best Continental reviews of modern music. He is also the author of a new book on Schoenberg.

ROLAND MANUEL, modern French composer, author of several stage works which have been produced in Paris theaters, is the musical editor of *Eclair*, and one of the best commentators on new musical developments. A pupil and disciple of Ravel, he is recognized as an authority on the work of that artist.

JEFFREY MARK is a young English musician who has recently been appointed chief of the music division of the reference department of the New York Public Library. A graduate of Oxford, and of the Royal College of Music, he has been associate editor of the latest edition of Grove's Dictionary. He is a contributor to the London Mercury, to Music and Letters, and to the Musical Times.

AARON COPLAND, one of the youngest American composers, was first heard of in this country from Paris, where for the last four years he has been writing music that has aroused the serious interest of French audiences. His symphony for orchestra and organ was played here this month by the New York Symphony Orchestra.

IRVING SCHWERKE, correspondent on the Paris staff of the Chicago Tribune, an assiduous observer of musical developments in the French capital, was among those who were sufficiently impressed last season with the work of Villa-Lobos to call the League's attention to the young Brazilian composer.

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The decorations on the pages of the Review have been taken from Guatemalan designs.

# THE LEAGUE OF COMPOSERS

Announces for its Second Concert,  
February 22, 1925,

## PIERROT LUNAIRE

The celebrated melodrama by ARNOLD SCHOENBERG, which  
will receive its second performance in this country  
in response to requests from the public;

## GAGLIARDA OF A MERRY PLAGUE

A chamber opera by LAZARE SAMINSKY, suggested to the  
composer by one of Edgar Allen Poe's tales, which will  
be given its premiere in a stage production; and

## DANIEL JAZZ

A musical interpretation by LOUIS GRUENBERG, of Vachel  
Lindsay's poem; it is one of the four American works  
selected for performance at next summer's  
festival by the International Society  
for Contemporary Music.

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The next issue of  
THE LEAGUE OF COMPOSERS' REVIEW  
Will appear in March.

It will contain articles by ADOLPH WEISSMANN, ANDRE COEROY,  
MME. WANDA LANDOWSKA, FRANK PATTERSON, DARIUS  
MILHAUD and others, and portraits of the three American  
composers whose works have been chosen for next summer's  
festival of contemporary music at Venice.

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(The League uses the Mason & Hamlin Piano.)

# THE LEAGUE of COMPOSERS' REVIEW

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## THE CURE BY LITERATURE

BY ANDRE COEUROY

NEVER before in its history has French music seemed so remote from literature and all the other arts as, at first glance, it seems today. If there is one striking aspect of contemporary aesthetics, it is the specific and absolute determination shown by each art form to find in itself alone its reason for being. Our young musicians, shut up in their laboratories and devoted to the search for the absolute are trying to discover a music which is nothing but music, music freed from all that is not musical, just as the painters are trying to produce painting that is subject only to the laws of line and color. This is the real object of their experiments, and, however fruitless, they never weary of renewing them.

To attain this end our musicians have had to rid themselves of all the preconceptions of romanticism. Not so long ago, in the period of symbolism, the old point of view was still somewhat in vogue. The philosophizing aesthete for whom "music was not intellectual" still persisted. Eric Satie, because he reacted in his own way against symbolism, has often been considered the man who marks the break with the old order. But this is questionable. Although he ridiculed poetic titles like Debussy's *Et la Lune Descend sur le Temple Qui Fut*, or *La Cathédrale Engloutie*, or *La Terrasse des Audiences du Clair de Lune*, he himself merely substituted one symbolism for another, a pseudo-humorous for a

pseudo-poetic one. When he called his pieces *Morceaux en Forme de Poire*, or *Sonatine Bureaucratique*, or *Préludes Flasques Pour un Chien*, he unwittingly used the symbolism he thought he had destroyed, the symbolism of laughter instead of the symbolism of tears. Approving or disapproving, one cannot see in this any fundamental change.

It is quite true that Satie has had an influence on the younger group, but this influence has not been brought to bear precisely in the realm of their art. It is Satie's personality and the special atmosphere which has grown up around it that has influenced them. Satie means the retreat at Arcueil. He stands for wit and drollery; caricature, the charming idiosyncrasy, the bold or satirical quip. Youthful vivacity carried over into maturity, impulsive liveliness, all these form a group of personal characteristics and at the same time a philosophy of life which the young French musicians, and especially those who until recently have been known as the Six, have cultivated under Satie's influence, and have also enriched according to their individual temperaments.

But let me repeat that here is no deep-seated innovation in musical aesthetics. It is a safe wager that if the Six had had only Satie as their guide the best of them would not have achieved that clearness of aesthetic vision which marks their most recent works: *Salade* by Darius Milhaud, or *Les Biches* by Francis Poulenc, or *Les Fâcheux* by Georges Auric.



They needed a Cocteau, that is, a poet and a critic. It was necessary that literature should come to deliver music, not by offering its support, (it was this support which almost ruined music in the time of symbolism), but by proposing its methods. "See, how I have cured myself," Literature said to Music, Jean Cocteau acting as interpreter. And this curative treatment was explained quite undogmatically, in fact with an air of playfulness, in Cocteau's little pamphlet called *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, published by the Sirène Press in 1918. Impressionism had just



touched off its fire-works at the end of a long fête. It was Cocteau who undertook to fire the first salute of another fête. He loaded his gun with simplicity, that simplicity which was destined to make the literary fortune of the works of Raymond Radiguet: *Le Diable au Corps*, and *Le Bal du Comte d'Orgel*, as well as of Cocteau's own tales: *Le Grand Ecart* and *Thomas l'Imposteur*.

This simplicity signified no impoverishment, no retrogression. For simplicity develops at equal strides with elaboration; and the simplicity of our young musicians is obviously no longer that of the composers who wrote for the harpsichord. Simplicity which appears as a reaction against elaboration grows out of that elaboration; it clarifies, it condenses the copiousness which it has inherited. This literary simplicity has come to cure music of its intricacies, its artifices, its legerdemain. It has forced music to face its audience. This is what Cocteau meant when he said, "I demand French music that is French."

French prose, tired of being vague, was tending toward nothing so much as clarity. So French music, Cocteau demanded, should be neither music to swim in, nor music to dance on, but music to walk with. The impressionists, both in poetry and music, had feared bareness, emptiness, silence. Poetry, and shortly thereafter music, taught us that we had enough of clouds, waves, pools, water-sprites, and nocturnal perfumes, that what we needed was music rooted in the earth, music with its feet well on the ground, an every-day music. Away with couches, garlands, gondolas! Our need was music constructed as the new literature was constructed, in which one could live as in a house. Cocteau says again, "A friend tells me that after a visit to New York the houses of Paris look as though they could be held in the palm of the hand. 'Your Paris,' he added, 'is beautiful because it is built to the measure of man.' " So music, like poetry, should be built to the measure of man. It has ceased being a gondola, a race-chariot, and has become a chair, not always comfortable, it is true, but at least plainly recognizable to all.†

At the same time the manner of the cabaret and of the music-hall, which has inspired more than one young writer, Jean de Tinan, for example, was exercising its influence on music. During all the excitement over exoticism, the cabaret remained intact.

† This whole paragraph has been written by using images and formulas borrowed directly from Cocteau.—A. C.



A certain tradition was preserved there which was no less typical of the race for being vulgar. There our young musicians, led again by literature, could pick up the thread lost in the labyrinth of Germany and Russia. This they did not fail to do. They understood readily that the music-hall, the circus, the negroes, enrich an artist just as life itself does. To use the emotions which such spectacles arouse is not the same as to create art in imitation of another art. Cocteau himself has pointed this out. These shows are not art. They stimulate the artist just as machines, animals, a landscape or danger stimulate. In this way Cocteau created *Parade*, transporting it from the music-hall. And if *Parade* has had an influence, this is not at all due to the music which, although so recent, already seems withered and worm-eaten; but solely to its literary quality, which attempts to express the familiar movements of life, and grows directly out of the aesthetic theory of "art stripped to the bone." For only the real—this is another phrase of Cocteau's—only the real, even when it is veiled, possesses the power to move. The more this reality is without extraneous context, the purer the emotion which flows from it. What is true of poetry should also be true of music, and just this, recent experiments have verified.

Thus in our time, music, like the poetry which preceded and guided music along the path, has become the object of methodical study and a series of investigations,—the problem being to reduce it like a chemical substance to a state of absolute purity. To start this process, music had first to be isolated from all the ingredients which usually are mixed with it or even masquerade in its place. Following the example of the poets, the young musicians have neutralized the effect of subject matter by intentionally choosing the banal or common-place. In the same way that the literary movement has discovered in language new and until now unknown relationships, the musical movement has brought to light and has emphasized in its own idiom aspects which have been unknown or unperceived till now. The result is that while music and literature have never been so far apart in their form and in their spirit, they have at the same time never been so close in their methods.

# WHY MODERN MUSIC LACKS MELODY

BY WANDA LANDOWSKA

I HAVE noticed lately, that people are again exciting themselves about melody, beautiful me-e-lod-e-e! Once more we are going to hear this plump and charming person talked about. But then one always returns to one's first love. Not only journalists, critics, and musicians of the ancient regime; even Master d'Indy bestows upon her a supreme consecration: "Alone melody never ages," and his brief, conventional phrase is cited again and again.

Somebody—I do not remember who—has unearthed a saying of Haydn's which is the delight of the champions of melody: "Melody is the main thing, harmony being useful only to charm the ear." The good old uncle, his pockets stuffed with delightful sweetmeats, probably did not foresee with what confidence the world would one day lean upon his philosophical dogmas.

So harmony is useful only to charm the ear and melody is the main thing! Then how shall one class such works as the *Chromatic Fantasy*, most of the *Toccatas* and certain preludes in the *Well-Tempered Clavier* of Bach which are so denuded of melody that the first one, for instance, excited Gounod's pity? I could further cite hundreds of admirable works (and not alone Bach's), devoid of what one calls "melody" or else in which this element plays only a secondary part. The few compositions mentioned are worth most of the melodic beauties of Haydn. And let nobody charge me with irreverence toward the composer of *The Creation*. I have devoted a fair portion of my life to the study of his works and shall continue to my heart's content.



Why does our modern music lack melody? The answer is simple—because it is modern. Modern music has never been

melodic. In the seventeenth century the French accused Italian music of wanting melody, of resembling a bedizened coquette, full of vivacity, striving to shine everywhere to such a degree that all the emotions seem alike. A century later the Italians and their supporters, the Encyclopedists, are reproaching the French for making "learned music," destitute of melody.

Next, it was Gluck's turn to replace beautiful airs by clamors of despair and convulsive groans without the commingled charms of melody. And what is one to say of Bach, whose own sons ran to Padre Martini to learn from him the secret of his beautiful melody? Beethoven, even Chopin, had to clear themselves of such charges. And then Wagner, that monster who killed melody for all time!

We are forced to believe that the good lady has a tough constitution. The oftener her death is proclaimed, the more she has of health and rotundity, and everyone accused of being her murderer has become in his turn her benefactor and her savior.

Seventeenth century Italy had delivered melody from the polyphonic bonds which gripped it too tightly.

Lully saved us from the dragging and lugubrious musical style of the ancients.

Rameau freed us from "the Lullyan plain chant which people had psalmodized for a century."

The Italians of the eighteenth century delivered us from the dryness of Rameau by the delicacy and tenderness of their song. The romanticists freed us from the lightness of the Italians and the French from the contrapuntal cuirass which armored the music of Bach.



What is melody? Our friend, Jean Huré, gave an excellent definition in one of his articles. I am sorry that I do not have it at hand and that I am able to give only an awkward paraphrase: "Melody is a succession of notes forming a precise design, which detaches itself from the background of harmony."

Very well. But the thing that detaches itself for Jean Huré will not detach itself for a mediocre musician and will remain undiscernible for the layman. Take, for instance, Caucasian, Persian, Georgian or Armenian music, all of which has profoundly interested me for years. I find in it treasures of melodic beauty.

Now read the accounts of travellers and observe that where there is any question of exotic music you will run across the same phrases: "strange sonorities, monotony, lack of melody." Yet all such music is necessarily melodious since the natives of these places sing it with no less tenderness and fervor than we do ours. Only the melodic curves and the ornaments of their songs are not familiar to European ears. And this has been the case with all new music; with ears not yet accustomed to modern combinations and the vocal organs not habituated to reproducing them, people raise scandalized outcries about the disappearance of melody and the massacre of the human voice. There are certain wines which sweeten with time. We must believe that the years make music "sing," that they "melodize" it, if one may so express it, and that some music becomes so melodious in the process that it grows sickening. Melodious music is the music of yesterday. The music of today is not so yet, but it will be later; that is why we call it the music of tomorrow; that of the day before yesterday is either too much so or else, (and this oftenest), no longer so at all.

"Melody," they say, "is that in music which speaks most directly to the heart and the mind." That is very true. For the most customary melodic curves have been accompanied during entire epochs by words and situations which impressed upon each of them a definite significance, thus forming what we call the musical language—a language highly conventionalized, moreover, bound to an era and to a cultural status.

All of which reminds me of what Nietzsche said of a painter: "Look at this artist; he paints only what he thoroughly likes, and do you know what he likes so thoroughly? Only what he knows how to paint, what he has learned to paint." Melody is what touches us most. And do you know what touches us most? Whatever our ears can most easily take hold of and what our throats or fingers have learned to reproduce.



The melomaniac does not wish to content himself with a general impression of an opera or a symphonic work. That is too vague, too fugitive for him. He needs more palpable souvenirs, he needs melody—that is to say, some bits of song which he will hear murmuring in his ears all night and which he can hum next day and the following days in his office, at table and in his bed-room to the despair of his wife and others about him.

In this he is very much like those women who so love the restaurants where, as a sort of compensation for bad wine, they receive a pretty paper fan bearing the mark of the establishment.

For the musician melody is a broader conception, but so indeterminate that after a long discussion he never fails to add: "It goes without saying that all I have maintained concerns only *beautiful melody*."

What then is beautiful melody? That which is beautiful for one is not so for another. Berlioz was insensible to the melodic beauties of Bach. Chopin, lover of the songs of Poland, remained deaf to the folk-music of Spain. Submit an air of Massenet's to Saint-Saëns, d'Indy, Debussy; it is doubtful whether their judgments would agree.

Melody, beautiful melody, is a vague conception meaning very little and it is perhaps for this reason that it gets itself freely talked about and causes so much ink-spilling that I can not resist adding a few drops more.



It has not in the least been my intention to pose as a pioneer for ultra-modern music, which already includes masterpieces that champion it far better than I can. And on the other hand I do not in the least believe that something new must be created at any price. I know epigones of genius and I know ridiculous revolutionaries. It is much easier to smash all molds than to have a grain of talent. Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn changed relatively little. Bach was rather a reactionary. Wagner owes his greatness to the immensity of his genius and not to his innovations. It would



be pitiless, even cruel, to force upon shop-keepers, professors or professional musicians an art that was too new or too old. They have had so much trouble to make that of yesterday their own. Let them enjoy it a little!

The traditionalists cry out over the massacre of melody, the vinegar of new harmonies, and avert their faces in terror like some old man who sees the young folks cracking nuts with their teeth.

"When you were young didn't you do the same thing?"

"Yes," he replies (not without pride), "but I am sorry I did."

We too shall do likewise, because we shall want a real old age, accompanied by all the feelings that go with it—wisdom, and, *faute de mieux*, belated regrets; we want a real old age after a real youth.

Don't talk to us of hygiene—of healthy art, healthy melody! The most easily digested foods are not always the best flavored, and what is smoothest loses its taste once it grows familiar.

In the second half of the eighteenth century the *Bergères légères* ended by weighing as heavily as does the Wagnerian mythology today. And yet with what pleasure we revert in our day to the shepherdings of the past! Suffocated in the heavy atmosphere of over-worked romanticism some of us strive to refresh our souls in our magnificent past, others in novel harmonies.

Doesn't modern music seem melodious to you? Well, it will become so. Just a little patience, it is merely a question of time.

"Yes," people tell me "but this melody will never be as frank, as broad. . . ."

So much the better! We have had an entire century of broad and stout, thick and violent, burning and sticky melodies. If modern melody is short of breath, a little asthmatic, and does not address itself to powerful lungs, again so much the better.

"With a strong voice in one's throat," says Nietzsche, "one is almost incapable of saying delicate things."

To be sure, there is nothing like the sight of a great cabbage in flower. But let us also plant a few more fragile blossoms. Our garden is big enough.

## MAGYAR EXPLORERS

BY ADJORAN OTVOS

**T**WO unquestionably unique figures in the musical life of Central Europe are Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. Their contributions to modern music are the outstanding assets today of the culture of the Magyars.

What singular importance they possess is apparent when they are recognized as the first true representatives of Hungarian music. The fact is that, preposterous as it seems at first statement, their predecessors were either Hungarians but not composers of scope and significance, or else they were composers but not Hungarians.

Brahms, Liszt and Sarasate, whose names have always been associated with Hungarian music, employed more or less obsolete Hungarian airs and arranged them in a more or less Hungarian manner.

On the other hand, writers of popular and acknowledgedly Hungarian national songs belong to that type of composers who are best classified in America as "song-writers." Though the most popular Hungarian music has been written by them, nobody would think of calling Dankó Pista, Fráter Loránd, Dóczi József or Béla Zerkovitz composers in the largest meaning of the word. Lucrative as is the profession of writing popular music—and nowhere has it been more so than in Hungary—it is obvious even to that war-sick country, which cannot insure the needs of such poverty-stricken but inspired musicians as Bartók and Kodály, that these latter stand apart, taking their place in the sphere of the true artist.

Nor have they been content to achieve fame as individual creators. Bizarrely fanfaronaded over Europe as innovators in the modern idiom, whose every new composition has added luster to their reputation as iconoclasts, Bartók and Kodály have accomplished a pioneer work of quite a different nature, an exploration



BELA BARTOK

A Portrait by Joseph Kmetty

into the folk music of Hungary which has yielded a collection of historic significance, the most important and only authentic one made in that country.

Bartók, poor, and supported only by a scholarship he had recently won, started out in 1905 on an individual investigation of the music of his race. Spending a week with a friend in the country, he heard a servant singing, while at work, a tune quite different from the hybrid gypsy airs which pass as currency for Magyar music in Hungary and elsewhere. He contrived to conceal himself and, day after day, while the servant worked, recorded a number of songs whose primitive character he at once recognized. With this impetus he embarked on a tour which lasted over two years, as long as his money held out. On his journeys among the peasants he met Kodály who had set out on a similar mission of research. Without previous inkling of each other's aims they proceeded together, recording the ancient songs of the Magyars in the compilation which is famous today.

It was a heroic task, far more taxing than that of other explorers in folk music. For it should be understood that no people on earth are as unmusical as the Magyars.

Meeting in a convivial spirit they do not sing; they whoop it up. No one in Hungary has ever heard peasants singing quietly, much less in harmony. Each voice improvises its own variations. Every air is differently interpreted by different people. It requires a rare knack indeed, and courageous labor to trace one's way through this muddle of melody.



The union of Kodály and Bartók in an enterprise so scholarly is all the more remarkable in view of their differences in musical tendency and temperament.

Bartók, the greater innovator, a slight man, prematurely gray, of terrible nervous intensity, is reticent, taciturn and yet defiant. He was born in 1881 at Nagyszentmiklós, and entered the Academy of Music in Budapest at an early age, studying piano and



composition. From the outset he showed a capacity for absorbing only technical education, and displayed a remarkable individuality, even genius for trail-breaking. His very first suite, then regarded as daring, was ablaze with barbaric color, riotous with new rhythms.

Bartók's early music was closely akin to impressionism. To give it organic adhesion he employed every weapon of technical skill at his disposal, often cloaking shallow intrinsic values with extremely adroit external effects. Later he developed a perfect revelry of instrumental color. Rhythmic variety and complex chord combinations became increasingly important factors. Abandoning tonality, he introduced apparently irrelevant tonal bulks which lent his pattern a crudely picturesque effect.

Characteristic of Bartók's ever increasing output is his attitude of defiance, almost of spite. No sooner does a contemporary, Schoenberg or Stravinsky, introduce a new invention than Bartók brings forth one to top it. His second string quartet fairly hurls at Schoenberg a "Just for that!"



Kodály is in many ways Bartók's antithesis, a man of reserve, generally morose and even brusque. He is calm in appearance, with an almost Christ-like face. Born in 1882 at Kecskemét he too studied at the Budapest Academy and is at present the successor of Koessler there. He is by no means the ideal professor, lacking patience and pedantry, and believing moreover that the student should follow his own inclinations. Though ready to assist he refuses to guide.

In composition Kodály is no revolutionary. He is content to revise and improve on half a century of Magyar musical history. With a modern equipment he has managed to blend peculiarly Hungarian folk forms with Western musical culture. In no sense a destroyer, he chooses rather to weed out what is artificial.

In form he is clear and easily communicable; in rhythm, melody and harmony, unlabored. Not for him is the recording of great



levity or reckless carousal. His nature is disposed to melancholy, which, in his music, still conveys a sense of quiet power. He is not prolific, speaking only when his ideas are mature. Every bar of music is fastidiously made, and all his work bears a temperate quality.

Individual as they are in style and technique, Bartók and Kodály have sought and found one common inspiration. Today as in the past, folk song infuses new blood into music; gives it freshness and youth when it grows weary of artifice. But neither Kodály nor Bartók can be said to have taken music to the fount of folk song and dipped it there for baptism. Folk music, rather, has again been given a new life by the power of their art. Out of their most intricate orchestral cacophonies there shines forth today an occasional ancient, unalloyed melody, the most eloquent illustration of Magyar speech.



# THE TYRANNY OF THE ABSOLUTE

BY ADOLPH WEISSMANN

ONE of the chief tenets in the doctrine of the new music is evolution toward the absolute,—in other words toward pure music, or better still, pure counterpoint. Let us test the validity of this principle and its actual effect on music today.

The tendency, it is obvious, has been developed in opposition to the music of the nineteenth century. It is in conflict with the romantic, the emotional and the naturalistic. It demands of music the abolition of everything realistic, everything human, so that the art may emerge in its native purity. This theory, carried out to the letter, would result in paralysis, but fortunately the practise is not as drastic as the theory.

It is true that this movement toward the absolute is the main current in music today; we live in a period in which chamber music is almost sovereign. The spirit of the ensemble is being re-created in the sense that nothing superfluous or inflated is tolerated in the community of instruments. The creative world, invoking Bach, has turned ascetic. But it would be simple to demonstrate that Bach, fundamentally, is no ascetic. In repeatedly referring to Bach's linear counterpoint, one is apt to forget how melodically and harmonically a large part of his music is contrived.

It is of course desirable to abandon the orgies of sound, the self-revelations of the romantic, post-romantic and twentieth century music of a Richard Strauss, for the expression only of essentials. But the tyranny of chamber music necessarily results in the impoverishment of other forms. Absolute music carried to its logical conclusion would not only become the enemy of the theater, which is a tangible art, but would drive from the stage song, bound up as it is with a text and a content.

There are indications, however, that the dogma of the absolute is not adopted in its entirety. For example there are parody and the grotesque which play so large a role in modern music and of which the early Stravinsky was the pioneer. The chief resource of parody is rhythm, which is derived from vital human activity. Here music breaks away from the absolute, is indeed relative in the extreme. In parody, no matter how removed one may feel from the object of the jest, one's fundamental concern is with very tangible things.



Turning from the grotesque to dynamism, which is equally important in the new music, one recognizes another violation of the principle. This is particularly true of orchestral music. Arthur Honegger expressing his love for locomotives in an orchestral piece such as the *Pacific*, fortunately creates no absolute music, but sets out rather with a reality. One can say that everything called dynamism translated into music is a demonstration that the new music, even chamber music, expresses a theory, but, wherever possible, breaks through its confines and seeks a relation with something real. And here we must contradict Stravinsky—that is, the latest Stravinsky—who has outstandingly expressed the tendency toward pure music, but whose chief effects depend on dynamic energy.

Even Arnold Schoenberg, the most consistent advocate of the absolute, has written songs and monodramas. No one can deny that Schoenberg is supremely endowed for the expression of metaphysics in music. Indeed, he never found happiness in tone alone. The inclination toward chamber-music, in other words toward the absolute, was innate with him. In this medium he has given the world an example of how to break away from the all-too-human. Yet one cannot call his *Pierrot Lunaire* or his monodramas absolute music despite their attempt to submerge the theater in the accepted sense and to transfer action into metaphysical realms. Deep as is the impression made by such works, it is exactly the

contraction in the sphere of the theater which exposes a certain wearying inflexibility in the expression of feeling.

In brief, it is my purpose to emphasize the existence today of a positive tendency toward the absolute and at the same time to point out that contemporary, like all earlier music, inevitably attempts to free itself from the bonds of dogma. The present practice of asceticism also finds expression in the sphere of sonority. Here music striving toward pure counterpoint has made its farthest advance. But sonority is equally an element that is inseparable from the human organism. Music that is absolute must liberate itself from real sound and can only claim to be heard by the inner ear. While it is true that this principle has been carried out in a great deal of chamber music and in chamber orchestral compositions, there are many modern creators whose special distinction lies exactly in the discovery of new sonorities.



There can be no doubt of the extraordinary difficulty of releasing music from human bonds. The war against romanticism is significant only if it is directed against sentimentality. Sentimentality is fundamentally sterile. It will be impossible, however, to build up music outside human emotion and the human organism. The moment it attempts to abandon its relation to them both, music loses the ground under its feet. Because music is so intimately tied up with human activity, the distinction that has developed between vocal and instrumental music will not be maintained in the long run. Much of the new music is conceived and constructed as if there were no such thing as a human voice. The voice represents the sensuous element in music. In so far as one increases the separation between instrumental and vocal music, one does make music absolute to a certain extent, but one withdraws it from the fountain-head of the art. The community between both kinds of music cannot be ignored either in the song or the choral work. That is why neither the one nor the other prospers today.

So far as one can foresee, the future of music lies in its liberation from the rigidity of dogma. Only by a free employment of means, wavering always between the sensuous and the metaphysical, can music retain the far-reaching enthrallment which has been its prerogative from the first. Therefore it is certain too, that a relation to the tangible and the human will spring up again in a new form and music will cease to be absolute. With dogma overthrown, the life of art will again be renewed.





## BUSONI THE MUSICIAN

BY GUIDO GATTI

**I**T has been said that the death of Ferruccio Busoni deprived us of one of the world's greatest pianists. This judgment is only part of the truth, for although I think Busoni is second to none of the great piano virtuosos from Liszt to Rubinstein, virtuosity was not his chief distinction. He was a composer before he was a pianist, and never ceased his creative activity even in the years of his most intensive concert appearances.

What he asked of the public was to be judged as a complete artistic personality. That unity which in his last years he made the essential attribute of music, he desired them above all to recognize in himself. Pianist, orchestral director, composer, editor, transcriber, judge of aesthetic problems, poet, painter—none of these activities sprang from nor took the form of dilettantism. They were the various aspects of a single aesthetic consciousness, the many expressions of a single countenance.

Certainly Busoni was an exceptional performer-interpreter. His conquest and absolute control of the instrument was so complete that one eventually lost sight of technique. He destroyed the dividing line which, even in the case of the best performers, is perceived between performance and interpretation, between faithful reproduction of the letter of the composition and re-creation of the work of art, the product of the spirit. He overcame all the obstacles of form and mechanics which each composition contains. He sought to divine just what was felt at the moment of creation, and to take account of those additional meanings which the artist had been unable to transfer to the page because of the imperfections of instrument and of notation. Hearing him play, the sensitive critic felt that a sure and powerful intuition had vivified music whose form was rigid and changeless only in appearance.

But however great as an interpreter, he was, let me repeat, no less great as a musician. Busoni had so felicitous and rich a musical

nature that one inevitably turns for a parallel to Mozart. I shall not here attempt a comparison between the two. What I mean to emphasize is that an affinity seems traceable if we discount the cultural accumulations and refinements of aesthetic taste which characterize our era, and think of the *quality* of Busoni's music, of the essence of his creative impulse, of the form his ideas assumed when they were first expressed in music. It is an affinity instinctive at the outset, which gradually becomes more conscious and decided; the mind discerns, justifies, confirms and synthesizes what the spirit has felt. All the works of Busoni, from the *Sonata in E-minor* for the violin to those pages which we know of *Dr. Faust*, show us uninterrupted progress toward what Busoni called "the new classicism." This might be characterized as a return to the Mozartian spirit, to the purifying serenity in the smile of the divine youth, to a more intimate feeling for the essence and unity of music.

Naturally Busoni carefully refrained from preaching a pure and simple return to the forms of the past: he was too wise to attempt one of those archeological exercises that find their apostles in every twilight period of art. To have his eye fixed upon Mozart meant, for Busoni, to build himself a modern style which would have no other function or end than to express purely musical states of soul, withdrawn from sentiment. He did not admit that one kind of music can be distinguished from another according to its purpose.

"Music," he wrote, "remains nothing but music, regardless of the place or form in which we find it." Such a doctrine of the autonomy of music denies all possibility of the collaboration or integration of two arts: specifically, in the case of works composed for the theatre. And because he held this theory regarding the opera, Busoni naturally encountered serious opposition. His essay *On the Opera*, which took the form of a preface to *Dr. Faust*, aroused discussion that was more or less critical but always interesting.

Yet no one can deny that his ideas have perfect coherence. On the one hand he opposed *sensibilismo*, which he considered to be uncontrolled abandonment to the sentimental impulse, and on the other he renounced formulas and thematic developments in favor

of melody freed from the influence of harmony, of melody which by the very energy of its movement might break the resistance of chords and decisively assert its own lines. He thus placed himself among the anti-Wagnerians and at the same time kept aloof from the impressionists, in whom, even more than in Wagner, he felt an abdication of the rights of music. In this respect he was a precursor of the most reasonable and promising aesthetic movements of today.

His music had freed itself from every suggestion of form in the academic sense. His works cannot be explained by commentaries as if they were sermons. They have no titles. All the product of his last years might be assembled under the simple heading: "Music by Ferruccio Busoni."

At times his work is so abstract that it is not characterized by the peculiarities of any particular instrument. His contrapuntal *Fantasy*, based on the last incomplete fugue in Bach's *Art of the Fugue* is published for one and for two pianos, but he himself tells us that he did not write it for any particular instrument, but conceived it merely as music. So indeed it appears to anyone who examines it. And just as the melodic idea is entirely independent of timbre, it is also independent of tonality. At the moment of its creation it very evidently had no connection with any tonality.

For so lively a spirit lazily to adopt a formula, to reproduce continually the same idea, or to stop at the solution of the first problem, meant stagnation and death. I am thinking of that passage in *Le Jardin d'Epicure*, where Anatole France writes: "*Une chose surtout donne de l'attrait à la pensée des hommes: c'est l'inquiétude. Un esprit qui n'est point anxieux m'irrite et m'ennuie.*" To the last day of his life Busoni was concerned with problems of his art. Restless straining toward an ideal did not mean a search for new things at any cost and a systematic rejection of the old, but the attainment of a perfection which he regarded as the completion of his own personality. "He who produces, in art, desires only the completion of the thing he makes. Implicit in his work there is always the idea of a new project; and this, in fact, is what distinguishes production from imitation."



ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI  
A Portrait by Carlo Pettrucci



## FOLK FABLES

BY FRANK PATTERSON

**A**TUNE is a certain succession of notes written in a certain rhythm, sung or played at a certain speed which is natural to it. If the second and third of these conditions are altered—the rhythm and the speed—the tune ceases to be what it originally was. As a rule if these conditions are materially altered it ceases to be a tune at all, and always it ceases to express the same emotions revealed in its original form.

It is for this reason that the use of folk song as the basis of musical composition need not necessarily result in the expression of any part of what we rather loosely call the soul of the folk. And when we stop to consider how superficial an aspect of that soul these popular songs generally represent, we may well wonder whether the application of folk song to serious music is of any significance.

Musically speaking, the folk song, whatever the poem may be, is rarely deep enough to convey any but the lightest externals of feeling. Although the words are sometimes soul-searching the music almost never is.

Post-war propaganda for nationalistic art has brought the folk song again to the fore as the only firm and reliable medium for such efforts. But what many people mean, and fail to realize, when they say that folk idiom has been used as the basis of this or that symphony, is that its tunes are of a rather more popular nature than a serious composer would be likely to invent or care to use except with the excuse of their folk significance. It is moreover an important fact that the harmonization and arrangement of the tunes really give them whatever soul-expression they may have.

When Scotch tunes are arranged by a Beethoven we are at a loss to know whether, from the point of view of folk-soul, the finished work expresses Scotland, Germany, or Beethoven. When Bizet



and Moszkowsky use popular Spanish melodies, do they bare the soul of Spain? Is Italy characterized or caricatured in the Italian symphonies of Tschaikowsky, Mendelssohn and Strauss, or are they writing the impressions of a traveler? When Chopin wrote "national" music of Poland, and Liszt of Hungary, did either reach the depths of those works written simply with the intention of saying something musical?



Especially in America are such questions pertinent. Dvorak writes an American symphony on real or imitation Negro folk songs and many accept it as American. American composers, in search of idioms, take them from Indian and Negro sources. Modern European composers also borrow from the American Negro. Jazz becomes a world idiom.

The way out of this maze, it appears to me, is to seek true nationalism in the spontaneous utterance of the great; the German soul in Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Wagner; the Italian in Rossini, Donizetti, Ponchielli, Verdi, Puccini; the French in Gounod, Bizet, Charpentier, Fauré, Debussy; always, above all, in those works written with nationalism most absent from the mind.

From another angle, has any strongly characteristic native work ever made appeal except by its quaintness? Is not conscious nationalism likely to be rather a disturbing influence?

National characteristics are as accidental in music as in life. A native American who set himself the task of being consciously "American" would instantly become an object of ridicule. What should be normal, natural—indeed, inevitable—would become an offensive affectation, necessarily falling into exaggeration and distortion.

It may be questioned whether we know our own characteristics, or those of others, except the most negligible externals.

It seems to me that it is impossible to set down in music this national soul by the aid of so conscious a means as folk song. There

remain, on the other hand, naturalness, sincerity, spontaneity. Each national has but to be himself to express the national soul, to the extent of his power of utterance.

Upon these characteristics rests the tremendous power of German and Austrian music, and of Italian operatic music. The great Germans and Italians have developed their natural resources with lack of self-consciousness and stubborn resistance to external influence. The Russians, with a few notable exceptions, have been self-conscious. France, until Debussy, allowed itself to be influenced from abroad, even accepting foreign composers, Gluck, Rossini, Meyerbeer, and Franck, as native. So we might run through the list of nations, but in the end, at the head of the list we would find the Germans and the Italians, because their composers, in expressing themselves, have expressed the soul of their country. Folk song and nationalistic fanaticism left them untouched—they were too busy writing music.



# FORECAST REVIEW

## MODERN MUSIC IN GALLUP, NEW MEXICO

THE trans-continental comes to a stop in the middle of the vast plateau which is western New Mexico. Under the hot sun of early autumn lies Gallup, with its Main Street sprawling back from the railroad tracks. The street is alive, swarming with Indians from all parts of the Southwest. They come from far-off Taos, at the foot of the Colorado mountains, dignified in their white robes, their black braids hanging heavily over their shoulders; from the hot brown villages of the Rio Grande valley, from the Mesa villages, the fortified hill-towns of the Zunis and the Hopis. And the Navajos, eternal shepherds, eternal nomads, with raven locks and arrogant moustaches, their blouses hung with silver and turquoise, are riding in from their neighboring grazing lands, high on horse, followed by wives and children, like conquering hordes from the plateaux of Tibet. They have come to take part in the Inter-tribal Festival. Already impatient groups are singing and dancing. The brass band is playing. It is a Wild West Show, really wild and West, with Madison Square far away.

It is not possible to describe what takes place in Gallup for three days and three nights. A sun-dance by the Indians from Zia—the dancers' half-naked bodies gorgeously painted, some golden, some black, (the black ones, Night, with their long hair falling wildly over their faces) is a symbolic orgy—the clash between Night and Day—beside which the most exciting moments of the Russian Ballet seem pale. A Bow-and-Arrow dance by the Indians of Tesuque is of a rhythmic intensity and power unknown to us in our concert-halls. In the charming Basket-dance by the Indians from Santa Clara the men weave beautiful designs around the women, who, scarcely moving from one spot,

supply a sort of static element by balancing with gentle rhythm from one foot to the other. The grotesque and lascivious antics of the Hopi Fun-Makers which vastly amuse the onlooking Indians, are a reminder of the joy which we eternally take in beholding the ape in man. There is a thrilling War-dance of the Comanches. There is the eerie and silent Fire-dance of the Navajos, which the men, completely stripped except for loin-cloths, dance at night, around a colossal bon-fire, seeming to scorch themselves on the flames. All this must be seen and heard if one would know what great artists are the Indians and what a potent thing their music.

The music of the Indians is in some ways simple and crude. Instruments of exact pitch are practically unknown to them and they must express themselves completely in the fundamental elements of music, rhythm and melody, the rhythm of their instruments of percussion and the melody of their voices. The contrapuntal cathedrals of Palestrina have come and gone. Harmony has evolved from Monteverdi to Schoenberg. Indian music still stands where it was, in its primeval simplicity and strength.

The simplicity of their music, though, is more apparent than real. Their rhythms are remarkably complex. They have an amazing way of swinging abruptly from one to another and then back again to the first—a momentary jolt, a discomfort which makes the comfort of the initial rhythm all the more pleasurable. Their phrases are rhythmically free and not, like ours, constrained by bar-lines and symmetrically-shaped periods. In this way their music retains much that we no longer have. With an instinct for sustaining simultaneously two or more rhythms, far more subtle and genuine than ours, they constantly sing in rhythms of three against drum-beats of two, and vice-versa. And they do these things quite naturally, with ease and precision. At the moment of sunrise, in the Hopi Snake-dance, it is said that as many as seven distinct rhythms are kept going simultaneously—a frenzied delirium of rhythm.

Their melodic sense is less striking. Often charming in line, the melodies are expressive of a number of clearly defined moods, a gentle tenderness, a barbaric wildness and fury and a virile full-throated jubilation. They are almost invariably pentatonic, though



it is not always the same five notes which are used. We find sometimes wild combinations of chromatics with very clear suggestions of quarter-tones—a gorgeous impurity of sound. The War-songs, strangely enough, are usually of a very open and major character.

The Indians have a fine sense of design, as we know from their baskets and their pottery. The construction of their melodies is marvelous, combining clarity with firmness of outline, subtlety and strength, and they attain wonderful climaxes. Evangelio Gutierrez, a musician of the Pueblo of Santa Clara, showed how he composed his melodies by drawing carefully on a piece of paper lines of various lengths—each line a musical phrase, the repetition of each line, the repetition of that phrase. It was a charming design—on the paper and in the music.

Their instruments of percussion are many and varied. They beat on drums, tom-toms of various size and pitch, some more vibrant, more sonorous, some more tight, more incisive. They shake gourds, whose seeds, rattling in the hard shell, symbolically fructify the earth. We have seen men from Jemez with desperate energy beating sticks on bundles of hides, to supply a dull and distant throb for their dancing companions. The dancers themselves are hung with instruments of percussion so that their every move is at once a living sound. Around their necks and around their strong brown legs are strings of little shells, which tinkle softly. From their waists hang ropes of sleigh-bells, which jangle wildly, with a relentless and deafening insistence. The noise is hard and shrill—as brilliant as the painted bodies in the glaring sunlight. They rarely clap their hands as we do, but the sound of their bare feet beating against the hard earth is a very real intensification of the living rhythm.

Indian music is music of today. It is more of Stravinsky than of Brahms. It has a certain objectiveness. Not sentimental, not descriptive or anecdotal, it has clarity and strength of form. As in jazz, the rhythmic element predominates, but here the rhythm is a more integral part of the melody, of the phrase. There is also far more diversity of rhythm than in jazz.

The Indians do not care much for our music. With apparently no direct contact between theirs and ours, as there is between ours and the negroes', their music remains uninfluenced; and we, until



now, have not been ready for Indian music. Today we feel kinship with primitive man and respond to it for the first time.

Crude and primitive this music may be, but, throbbing with intense energy, its wild insistent rhythms, its barbaric dynamics fascinate us. One is reverent before its spirit, for the Indians' music is most often a part of their ritualistic dances—Rain-dances, Corn-dances, War-dances—and acquires therefore a religious, or at least a symbolic significance. This is great and unconscious art, which finds its roots deep in the past, in aeons of racial unity and race-tradition. In the early-morning atmosphere of the Far West one's senses are reborn. One marvels anew at sunset and sunrise and at those two eternal phenomena—melody and rhythm. And one sees in the simple strength of Indian music, wild, yet ordered, a complete expression of the soul of a great race.

*By Frederick Jacobi*

## ANOTHER SCHOENBERG DITHYRAMB

OF all living composers who have achieved international fame, the troublesome fellow is still Arnold Schoenberg. We have pretty well got the hang of Stravinsky—or think we have. He no longer shocks, alarms, or puzzles by his riddles and his wild capricious ways. Not always does he even amuse. Signs are not wanting that his once scandalous *Sacre du Printemps* will shortly be heard by audiences with the same equanimity that they mete out to the *Fingal's Cave* overture. Of course Stravinsky may yet turn about and astonish those of his critics who, like Mr. Ernest Newman, have already appraised his worth and designated his permanent place in the cosmos. The composer of *L'Oiseau de Feu*, of *Petrouchka*, and of *Le Sacre* (with its few "great pages" soaring from a trivial undergrowth), this one-time Antichrist of music turned *bon petit maître*, numbers his years, let us not forget, at only two and forty.

Schoenberg at fifty has been extravagantly praised and as hotly denounced, but, save for those who long ago consigned him to everlasting perdition, I am not aware that anybody has attempted the final summing up. The composer of the *Five Pieces for*

*Orchestra* and of the *Pierrot Lunaire* still baffles critics who have no desire to stamp on him as a limb of Satan, still terrifies the tenderer souls who really believe, little as they may admit it, that the cycle of music ended with the *Vier ernste Gesaenge* of Johannes Brahms.

Expressed opinion of Schoenberg has divided sharply. On the one hand are those critics who, refusing to disregard the history of music as one more mad and negligible Cassandra, give heed to her story. They recall the abuse heaped upon Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Wagner. They are aware that less than half a century ago a leading music critic of Boston declared that Sterndale Bennett could write a better symphony than Brahms's second; that another reviewer of the same city held that the composer of *Till Eulenspiegel* must be insane; that even the late James Huneker classed Debussy among his musical anarchs.

Remembering all this and much more from the long testimony of history, certain critics of Schoenberg have written of him in purple and swollen praise. What these eager appreciators forget is that history has other counsels of error. A certain Stephen Phillips, a bare quarter of a century ago, was hailed almost at his début as an abiding glory to English poetry. Dante, Milton, the Greeks were wrenched from their spheres by habitually sober critics and trotted up to make obeisance before this talented young genius. Today who in the starry universe bothers an instant about Stephen Phillips? But to the Schoenberg dithyramb considerations of that sort mean as little as the warnings of history to his scandalized detractors.

This is prefatory to the admission that I, though baffled by Schoenberg, yet open-minded and desiring guidance, have before me a little book by Paul Stefan, the eminent Viennese critic, entitled *Arnold Schoenberg: Wandlung, Legende, Erscheinung, Bedeutung*, that is prefaced by a *Selbstbildnis* the sight of which would give a nervous child fits; that I read it with my heart full of hope, and put it down still baffled.

Herr Stefan writes of the life, theories, and attainments of his subject; he sketches his development; he briefly analyzes his works. The book is interesting, informative, valuable for reference. But when Stefan, who is no devil's advocate, but quite the

contrary, has said all of his well considered and appreciative say, have I any further clue as to what is the real inwardness of this author of strange, enigmatic, exasperating compositions? Says Herr Stefan, for example, "The magic of the song *Herzgewaechse*, poem by Maeterlinck, lies in the wonderfully delicate atmosphere, in the extraordinarily difficult leading of the soprano, which, rising steadily, reaches the high F (Queen of the Night!), and in the disposition of the accompaniment: celesta, harmonium, and piano." Now, that is all very well if you look at the thing that way, but I remember that when I heard it I didn't, and here Herr Stefan in the matter-of-courseness of his own faith, gives me no reason why I should.

In the section entitled *Bedeutung* I read: "Schoenberg is an ecstatic and a believer—but not from extravagance, from joy in the extreme, by no means yielding to temptation; but because, obedient to a duty, he must seek what might bring more of sorrow than of happiness. He destroys in an instant a slice of his own self, while, obeying the call of a problem, a problem that only he can solve, he seeks and forms the new." From a passage of this sort I get nothing which starts the scales in descent from my ears. I gather that Herr Stefan, expounder and panegyrist, has much to say of interest for those who already have passed the barriers that separate the later Schoenberg from the music of an earlier day and so at least have some basis of comprehension to work on. But to the lesser breeds without the law of the cryptic Viennese musician, the book tells nothing positively helpful. In time the scales may yet fall and I may hear Schoenberg steadily and hear him whole. But whether I then find myself accepting or rejecting, it will be small thanks to this little book. Not here is Paul Stefan the missionary who turns the unconverted heathen toward the burning faith which is Arnold Schoenberg.

*By Pitts Sanborn*

## PLACING THE CRITICS

AN amusing thing where professional criticism of music is undertaken is the readers' estimate of the critic. The only thing more amusing, if the truth could be known, would be the

critics' estimate of themselves. All these estimates would be wrong. Neither the critic nor his critics can accurately place him. The critics of course could be assorted roughly in groups—those of the conservative, liberal or radical persuasions. They could be further separated into two classes,—those who work sincerely and those who love to hear their own voices and impress gullible readers.

There they are, critics and criticasters, serving some unknown purpose of the Almighty. In the meantime, the earth revolves on its axis; a few, a very few compositions survive the years, to prove or disprove the contentions of the critics, which in the main have been forgotten.

It is, therefore, evident that so far as critical fortunes of the moment are concerned it is easiest and often most entertaining to write about new music. In this field the apostle of the *dernier cri* is as secure as the most learned and laborious commentator. Guessing is free for all, and there is no criterion by which anyone can be confounded. There is also the good old gag about the genius ahead of his time, misunderstood by the carping Beckmessers of the period. That this is largely fallacy, that the greatest composers, in spite of contemporary opposition, have seldom failed to secure emphatic recognition before they died, is not recognized by the public or by those musicians to whom the legend of persecuted genius has been as balm of Gilead. But it is a good war-cry, and often it rallies public sympathy.

In this field, as in no other, is it held that "one man's opinion is as good as another's." The phrase is misleading, like the phrase about all men being created free and equal. All men have not, intellectually speaking, an equal right to their opinions, and one man's opinion rarely has the same value as another's.

Which brings us back to the preliminary contention. Not only are opinions very different in value, but that value cannot be determined, except on the very broad lines indicated, at the time that they are given. This man, for instance, is labelled by his contemporaries a "radical;" that one is "conservative" and "reactionary." In the light of later progress these positions would certainly be altered; they might even be reversed. Nor do the words "conservative and "reactionary" have the same meaning. The con-



servative is an indispensable element of artistic progress. The reactionary is not. He is the man who looks backward and will tolerate no departure from the past. The conservative, in the true sense of the word, is aware that the past and the present contain the future, and that the future can neither be understood nor estimated apart from the past. To conserve fundamental principles and develop them is not only necessary, it is inevitable.

In this sense all great art has been fundamentally conservative. The fact that there have been fools who could see no fresh horizons in *Tristan* or *Pelleas* is no warrant for artistic parvenus, ignorant of the glory of Palestrina or the grandeur of the *Eroica*, proclaiming to the world the immortality of a Scriabine or Schoenberg.

These things should be self-evident, but apparently they are not. What should be the attitude and methods of a critic in the discussion of new music, or old music for that matter? There is one short answer. They must be his own. Nothing else is of any use. Nothing less than his own reactions, expressed as plainly as may be, mean anything to anyone. The rest must be left to the public and to posterity. But woe to the man who writes with regard to either of these. If he does, he has failed before he has begun.

The task of the professional commentator is obviously to prepare himself as completely as he can for the hearing of the new music, and then to put himself on record. If he is one of the very rare men of genius who find their expression in writing about an art, then his estimates may be read by succeeding generations because, like any other work of art, they have in them material of more than contemporary value. But this very seldom happens. What the critic who is honest in his work may expect, is to form one of the minute particles of which a period is made, and to find himself in his artistic experiences. Whether he is right or wrong he will never know nor does it matter. But if in criticism he does not discover vistas of beauty he had better drop his work and take a spade or dentist's forceps in hand for a living.

By Olin Downes





## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

ANDRE COEUROY is noted in France for his critical interest not only in music but in the other arts, particularly literature. He is one of the chief critics on *La Revue Musicale*, and his articles appear frequently in other journals of aesthetics.

MME. WANDA LANDOWSKA whose versatility defies any design of classification, is equally artist, scholar and critic of the first rank. While her insight has illumined the musical treasures of the past, it is to her inspiration that many composers today are dedicating their work.

ADJORAN OTVOS is a Hungarian composer of popular music and a journalist, who is now living in this country. He has studied with Kodály. In Hungary he wrote for *Pesti Napló* and *A Ujság*, and he contributes to both Hungarian and American weeklies here.

ADOLPH WEISSMANN, one of the best known German critics, the author of many musical volumes, writes for the *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag* and the *Vossische Zeitung*. He is chairman of the German section of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

GUIDO GATTI, one of Italy's foremost writers on music, has been a contributor to previous issues of the Review, in which his achievements have been recorded.

FRANK PATTERSON, associate editor of Musical Courier, is an ardent champion of the American composer. His point of view on "nationalistic" expression is the result of mature reflection.

FREDERICK JACOBI, young American composer who has written a great deal of chamber music, is best known for his symphonic poem *The Eve of St. Agnes*. His *Assyrian Prayers*, and a new string quartet were played in New York this year.

PITTS SANBORN, now music critic of the Evening Telegram and Mail, and before that of the *Globe*, made his bow to Review readers in the June 1924 issue.

OLIN DOWNES who has been music critic of the Times for the past two seasons, was formerly on the Boston Post, a position held by him for many years. He is the author of "The Lure of Music."

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The decorations in this issue have been taken  
from Peruvian and Guatemalan designs.

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(THE LEAGUE OF COMPOSERS USES THE MASON & HAMLIN PIANO.)













